

## AN AMERICAN HISTORICAL PAINTER.

FRANCIS BICKNELL CARPENTER.

"The glowing portraits, fresh from life, that bring  
Home to our hearts the truth from which they spring."

—BYRON.

*Buttrick's Magazine March 1896*

GILBERT STUART will ever be known as the painter of Washington. Francis B. Carpenter will go down to posterity as the painter of Lincoln. Stuart's Washington was painted at Mount Vernon in 1794, Carpenter's Lincoln at the White House in 1864. Each artist enjoyed an intimate personal association with his illustrious subject. This fact places the historical value of these portraits far beyond that attaching to any contemporaries. Stuart's Washington is the property of the Boston Athenæum. Carpenter's Lincoln still remains in the possession of the artist. Both should be owned by the Government and hung in the President's room in the National Capitol.

The story of Stuart's life has been often told. It is our pleasant task to record the struggles and triumphs of his successor in historical portraiture.

Francis Bicknell Carpenter was born at Homer, Cortland County, N. Y., August 6, 1830, the second of a family of eight children. His grandfather, Noah Carpenter, was one of the pioneer settlers of Western New York, having emigrated from Pomfret, Conn., in 1800, and settled in the then wilderness of Cortland County, where he took up a section of land, which still remains in the possession of his descendants. Noah Carpenter's mother was a sister of General Ethan Allen, of the American Revolution. One of her sons bore the name of Allen Carpenter. The father of Francis, better known as "Frank," was Asaph H. Carpenter, a fair representation of the New England type, born with the century and trained in the hard school of pioneer life. He was a stern, practical, hard-working farmer, and believed that his boys could do nothing better than

follow in his footsteps. The world of art was wholly an unknown region to men of his class at that day.

When Frank was ten years old an event occurred which proved the turning-point in his life. A lad, Fessenden N. Otis by name, came from a distant part of the State and for one winter attended the district school of the neighborhood. He was four years the senior of Frank, and possessed an uncommon talent for drawing. Surrounded by his admiring schoolmates, one day during recess he rapidly sketched on a panel of the school-room door a horse and a boy running at full speed. This wonderful drawing kindled a spark until then unknown in the ardent nature of farmer Carpenter's son. For months he strove day and night to copy it. Unaided by teacher, drawing-book, or models, other than young Otis's sketches, he made such progress as was possible under the conditions. A penny pencil and sheet of foolscap from the village store, three miles distant, was his only outfit. The instinct thus awakened thrived on the crude material at hand. The blank leaves of an old account-book and the weather-beaten boards on his father's barn and outbuildings afforded the young artist the only available surfaces on which to depict his chalk and charcoal creations. These became the subject of much comment among the neighbors. Deacon Ives, the nearest neighbor, being questioned as to Frank's talent for drawing, replied, "Draw! I should think so; you can't pick up a chip on his father's wood-pile that won't have a pictur' on it."

As the industry of the lad spent itself in the direction of drawing, to the neglect of his duties on the farm, his father was often told he would never



George L. Clough.

be able to make a farmer of Frank, but he gave no heed to the remark, little dreaming that the boy would choose a profession so little known as that of an artist. His general reply was, "Picture-making is the boy's pastime, he will grow out of it; if he does not like the farm there is the store, the shop, the trade." Just after Frank's thirteenth birthday the "store" was decided upon, and he was duly installed as clerk in a grocery store in Ithaca, kept by a relative. For a few months he tried to forget his chalk representations of "William Tell Shooting the Apple from his Son's Head," and "The Capture of Major André," which embellished his father's wood-shed. He failed utterly, however, in giving his relative satisfaction as a clerk. This period of his life was described by Whitelaw Reid, in a Washington letter to the *Cincinnati Gazette* in 1864, in these words: "The lad knew more of 'figure' than 'figures,' and other 'drawings' than those of molasses and vine-

gar." After six months' trial he was returned to his father with a letter, saying, "The boy's mind is taken up with picture-making, and he is no good in a store."

Just at this juncture a young artist, George L. Clough, of Auburn, visited Homer to paint the portraits of some of the residents. The discharged clerk found his way into the artist's temporary studio and confessed to the artist his ambition. Up to this time he had never seen but one or two oil portraits, and the earnestness of the lad induced Mr. Clough to permit him to witness the commencement of a portrait. The sharp eyes of the thirteen-year-old boy took in everything, the palette and brushes, the easel, the relation of the "sitter" to the painter, the curtained window admitting the light from the top—all was noted, never to be forgotten. The rekindled fire burned the brighter—the fever had "struck in." Its victim was restless and unhappy. Opposition from his father intensified his purposes. With white-lead, lamp-black, and brick-dust, and a piece of canvas given him by his mother, whom he persuaded to sit to him, his first portrait was painted. Concealment became no longer practicable, and he boldly announced to his father his purpose of becoming a painter. He had already a powerful ally in his mother. After some months prejudice and opposition gave way, and the father consented that the boy should seek instruction in Syracuse in the studio of Sanford Thayer, a pupil of Charles Loring Elliott, the most distinguished American portrait painter of his time. The boy made rapid progress, and during his five months' course he for several weeks enjoyed the advantage of suggestions and criticism from Mr. Elliott, who spent some weeks with Mr. Thayer.

Returning to Homer, Frank opened his first studio in the spring of 1846. His studio rent was twelve dollars per year, and the first year's rent was paid by painting a picture for his landlord. Orders came slowly. The well-to-do people of Homer could not believe that one of their own farmer boys, not

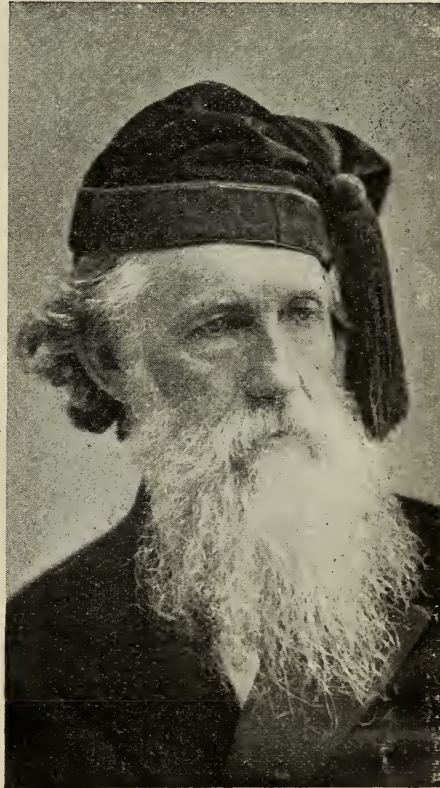


sixteen years of age, could paint a portrait. His first patron was a clerk in one of the stores, who kindly consented to sit for the young painter in order to overcome prejudice, and show the townspeople what he could do. The portrait when completed was exchanged for sufficient cloth to make a pair of much-needed trousers. His next order was from a journeyman shoemaker, and in payment he took a pair of boots. A leading citizen wished the portrait of a handsome cow belonging to him. Success with this brought a crisp ten-dollar note, the first he had ever received. He was then employed by Hon. Henry S. Randall to make drawings from his flock of sheep to illustrate his work on "Sheep Husbandry," then in course of preparation. This led to an order for portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Randall, which gave him an assured position in the community as a portrait painter. Our young artist next painted the portraits of the ten surviving original trustees of Cortland Academy for the Library. This added to the popularity of the portrait painter.

In 1847 young Carpenter, then seventeen years old, sent to the American Art Union of New York City an ideal female head. The picture, "The Jewess," was submitted with four hundred others. Out of this collection twelve subjects were selected for purchase, and this ideal head was one of the twelve. At the annual distribution by lot this painting fell to the Hon. George W. Schuyler, of Ithaca, N. Y. The Art Union paid Mr. Carpenter the, to him, munificent sum of fifty dollars for the picture.

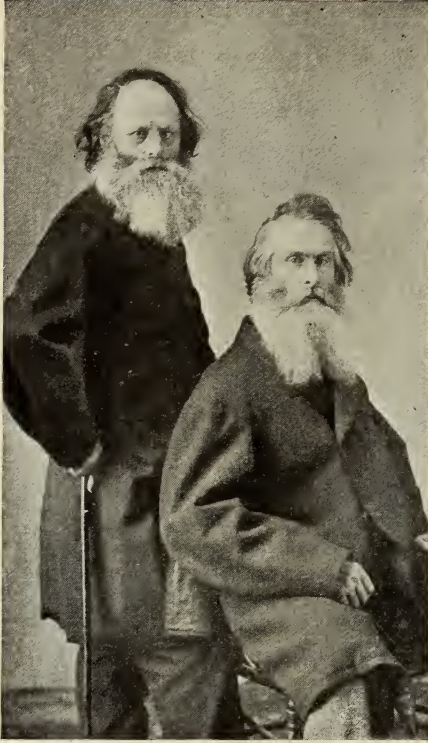
In May, 1851, Mr. Carpenter removed to New York City, and in August following, just after his twenty-first birthday, he was married to Miss Augusta H. Prentiss, a granddaughter of Deacon John H. Rollo, a well-known citizen of Central New York. He there renewed his acquaintance with Mr. Elliott, and made a new one in William S. Mount, the painter of the popular pictures, "The Farmer's Nooning," "Bargaining for a Horse," and "The Power of Music," all engraved for the Art Union.

To Alfred G. Benson, a prominent shipping merchant, Mr. Carpenter was indebted for his first important commission, after locating in New York. This was a whole-length portrait of David Leavitt, president of the American Exchange Bank. This painting was exhibited at the Academy of Design in 1852, and at once brought the artist into public notice. It was presented by Mr. Benson to the bank, and has since occupied a prominent position in the directors' room. Mr. Carpenter's election to the Academy soon followed, he being at this time the youngest man on its roll of membership. Mr. Benson next obtained for the rising artist an invitation to visit the White House to paint President Fillmore. Two full-length portraits were the result, one of which was pur-



Sanford Thayer.

Mr. Carpenter's only teacher in art.



Elliott (painter) and Palmer (sculptor).  
From a photograph taken in 1865.

chased by the city of New York and now hangs in the City Hall, the other being purchased by David A. Bokee, then the naval officer at New York. Mr. Benson then introduced Mr. Carpenter to ex-President John Tyler, who gave a number of sittings at the artist's studio resulting in one of the best of his portraits. This became the property of Clarence W. Bowen, of New York, who has a fine collection of historical portraits.

In 1854 Mr. Carpenter made his second visit to the White House to paint President Franklin Pierce. His success with these presidential portraits brought him into unusual prominence. Paragraphs floated through the newspapers describing him as phenomenally gifted—a youthful Benjamin West. The next year he spent much time in Washington, having commissions to paint Marcy, Cass, Seward, Chase, Houston, and Cushing. On his return

to New York it seemed as if all the eminent men of the country were flocking to his studio. Reverends Horace Bushnell, Samuel Hanson Cox, Lyman Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, E. H. Chapin, J. P. Thompson, Richard S. Storrs, Leonard Bacon, Sr., Professors Gibbs, Aiken, and Parker, from Yale, Dartmouth, and Grinnell Universities; Justice Caton, of Illinois; Mayors Talmage, Brush, and Hall, for the Brooklyn City Hall; C. L. Elliott and W. S. Mount, the artists; Theodore Tilton, John Pierpont, P. T. Barnum, Schuyler Colfax, and Charles Sumner; Horace Greeley, for the *Tribune* Association; Myron H. Clark, for the Governor's room, New York City Hall; Ezra Cornell, for Cornell University; Asa Packer, for Lehigh University; President Cattell, for Lafayette College; Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Bowen; Elizabeth Thompson, the philanthropist; Alice Cary, the poetess, Augusta J. Evans, the novelist, and Abby Hutchinson Patton, the songstress; George William Curtis, Goldwin Smith, James Russell Lowell, for Cornell University; Representative William E. Kelley, for the Union League Club, Philadelphia; Dr. Crawford W.



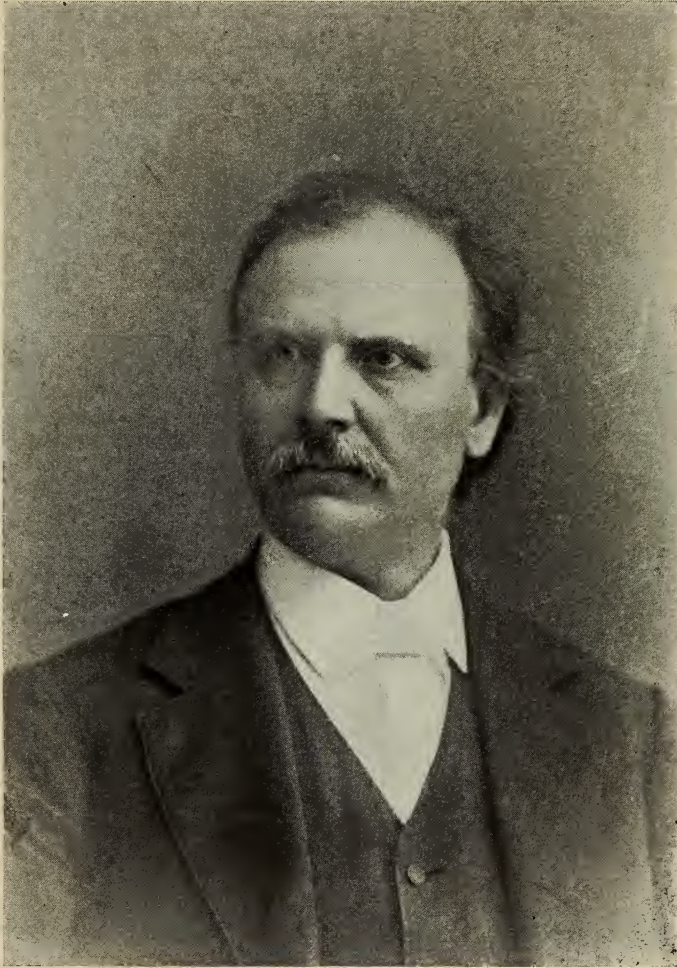
Mrs. Henry C. Bowen.  
From the original painting of 1858, by Mr. Carpenter.



Long, for the State House, Atlanta, Ga.; General Emerson Opdyke, of Ohio; Elisha Mulford, Fitz Hugh Ludlow, Steele Mackaye; Theodore J. Munger and J. B. Wallace, for the Produce Ex-

change length portrait of Lincoln by Mr. Carpenter, for the Capitol at Albany. This was completed in 1874.

The most interesting passage of Mr. Carpenter's life was his being invited



Frank B. Carpenter.

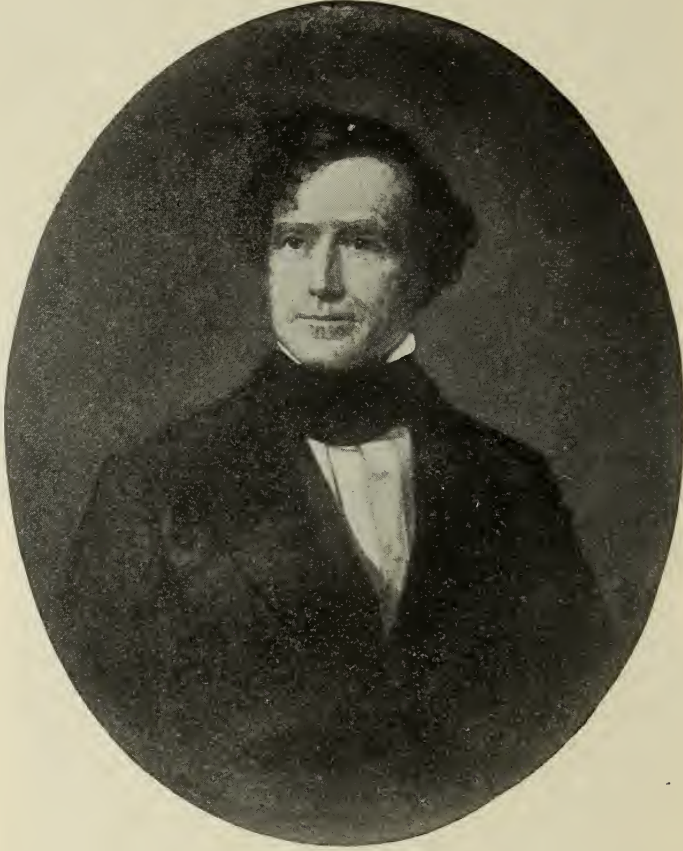
change; William M. Carson, for the city of Newburg, N. Y., and John W. Hutchinson, of the Hutchinson family of singers, now on his easel. In 1885 he painted a three-quarter length of President Garfield for H. C. Bullard, of New York, presented to Dartmouth College. In 1873 the New York Legislature appropriated \$3,000 for a whole-

length portrait of Lincoln to the White House, in 1864, to paint the historic scene of "The First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation before his Cabinet." We leave the recital of his six months' association with Mr. Lincoln while engaged on this great work, now the property of the nation, to the artist's pen as begun in the current

number of *THE PETERSON MAGAZINE*, and go to his second historical painting, "International Arbitration."

When the wisest statesmanship of Great Britain and of the United States determined upon and adopted arbitration as the means to settle the Alabama

ink was fairly dry on the signatures that made valid the treaty signed May 8, 1871. He met and was introduced to the English commissioners, and made personal studies of each, as a basis for his projected work. With the aid of Brady's admirable photographs



President Franklin Pierce.

From the original portrait painted by Mr. Carpenter in 1855, and now in the collection of Clarence W. Bowen.

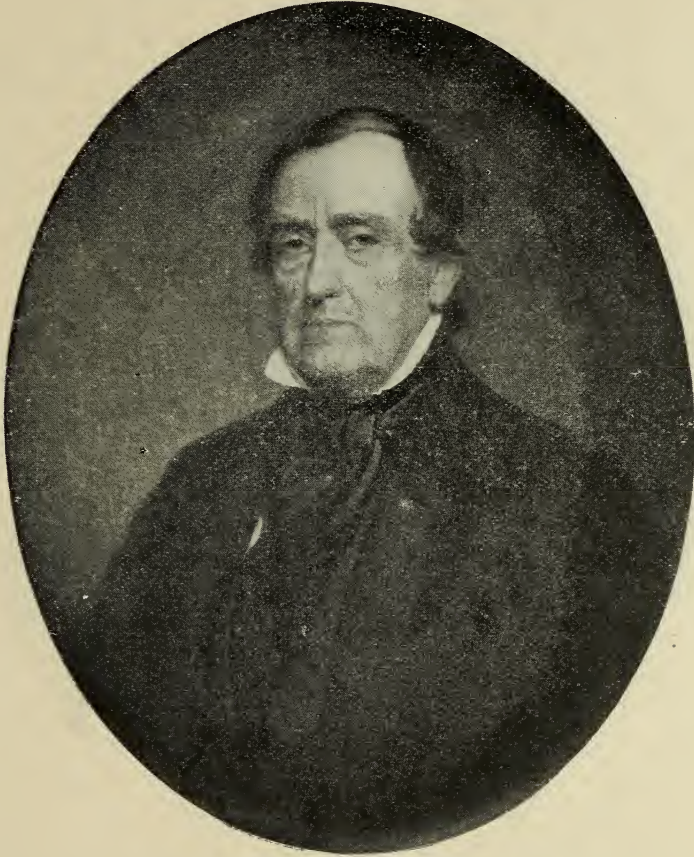
claims and other threatening international questions, they formed the first International Court of Arbitration and assembled at Washington in 1871, where they adjusted by peaceful arbitration questions theretofore in the history of the world never adjusted except by the sword. Mr. Carpenter saw in this another step in the progress of humanity, and determined upon a second historical picture before the

of the members of the commission, and from personal sittings by the American commissioners, he soon had the composition of the group on canvas. He, however, wisely discovered that he was twenty years ahead of his generation. The subject which had so inflamed his imagination, and which he characterized as "The crowning glory of Christianity in the nineteenth century," did not awaken the general public interest he



had expected, and he turned the canvas to the wall to await its time of resurrection. This came in 1889-90, in the Behring Sea agitation, and the appointment of a second Arbitration Commission. With his first conception of the painting had come to him the

it did happen. A public-spirited woman of wealth, Mrs. William W. Carson, of Newburg, N. Y., one day visited his studio in the winter of 1889. A curtain concealed the unfinished historical group. Her curiosity was aroused, and she asked to see the picture. With



Senator Lewis Cass, Secretary of State, 1857-61.

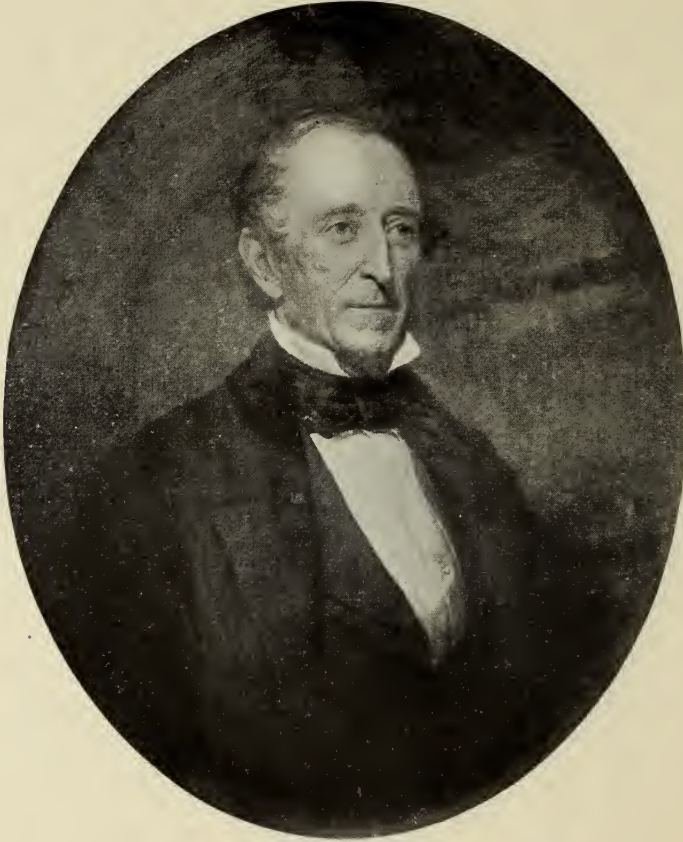
Painted by Mr. Carpenter in 1856, and now in the collection of Clarence W. Bowen.

place for its permanent exhibition to be the home of Queen Victoria, there to stand a perpetual witness of arbitration as a substitute for war. How the picture was to be finished, or how find its way across the sea, or if it would be accepted, he could not tell. In the case of his "Emancipation Proclamation," the "unexpected happened," and might it not now? And

some hesitation the curtain was withdrawn, and some moments of unbroken silence followed; then the questions were asked, "Why unfinished?" and "What its destination?" The first was easily answered, "Want of means;" the second, "Windsor Castle." Mr. Carpenter believes that there is an occult, mysterious power in the universe that accomplishes its purpose,

outside of mundane material conditions. His career would seem to afford some evidence to justify him in this belief. Be that as it may, the results that followed this interview were material. The work was completed, presented, and accepted by Her

ture, religion, statesmanship, journalism, and education, gave a memorable dinner to him on the occasion of the departure of the Arbitration painting for England. The guests numbered nearly one hundred, and as many letters of regret were read. Andrew D.



President John Tyler.

From the painting by Mr. Carpenter in 1854, now in the collection of Clarence W. Bowen.

Majesty, Queen Victoria, on Christmas-day, 1891, and is fulfilling its mission on the walls of Windsor Castle. Who can tell of the lessons of peace and fraternity this noble gift, "on behalf of the women of the United States," may convey to those in whose hands are the issues of peace and war!

On December 2, 1891, the friends of Mr. Carpenter, including as they do the representative men in art, litera-

ture, religion, statesmanship, journalism, and education, gave a memorable dinner to him on the occasion of the departure of the Arbitration painting for England. The guests numbered nearly one hundred, and as many letters of regret were read. Andrew D.



Haven, in the course of his speech at this dinner, said :

"There is one feature of the life of the guest of the evening to which no reference has been made, and that is his skill with the pen. I regard Mr. Carpenter as good a writer as he is a

should have sat up all night to read it. I am constantly urging my friend to do more with his pen. His relations with Mr. Lincoln and other eminent men of the country have been so close, that I am sure he could give us a volume of the greatest value.\* He has a memory as quick as his eye, and he carries in that memory treasures of incident and association with the great men of



William L. Marcy, Governor of New York and Secretary of State during the Pierce Administration.

From the painting by Frank B. Carpenter in 1856, now in collection of Clarence W. Bowen.

painter. . . . A great many books have been written about Lincoln and will continue to be written. They already run up in the hundreds. Among them all, however, there is not one that will convey to posterity a certain side of Lincoln's character that brings us nearer to the *man* Lincoln than that written by Mr. Carpenter. It is a daily picture, a daily photograph of Mr. Lincoln for "six months" of his life. It is not surprising that Charles Dickens, when he got hold of the book at the time he was in New York,

the country which would be of supreme value if they could be read in print. Now I venture to express a wish that as this great work is completed he will drop his pencil for a time and write a book."

*John Howard Brown.*

\* As already announced, THE PETERSON MAGAZINE has secured Mr. Carpenter to do this very work, and his first instalment of a series of articles on Abraham Lincoln is presented in this number.

## APPLES OF SODOM.

SHE stood at the end of a short maple-shaded avenue, this little Shaker maiden, her lithe form silhouetted against the glowing western sky.

On the steps of the office building Sister Hannah, the eldress, sat with her knitting. Her white hair, combed straight and smooth back from the part, showed in a beautiful silver line in front of the close-fitting cap, lighting her face like the dainty frame to some quaint medallion. Her thoughts were more busy with the little maid than with her work. The mellow, vibrant notes of Elizabeth's fresh young voice, as she had heard it in the meeting-house only an hour before, still lingered in her mind.

The stocking grew, row after row gliding from under the swift fingers. When the heel, with its neat gore, was finished, Hannah let her work fall to her lap and sat for a moment looking anxiously at the young girl. Elizabeth may have felt the look, for she turned toward the house, and the eldress, tucking her ball of yarn under her arm, went slowly down to meet her, knitting as she went.

"Art thou still unhappy, child?" she asked, as they walked up and down the lane.

"More than I can tell thee," Elizabeth answered, passionately.

They crossed the broad macadamized street, over into the meadow and down to the little cool grove. They paused to listen to a bobolink singing as he swayed up and down on the top of a tall dry weed in the meadow.

"Now listen to me, sweet one," called the Shaker maiden as the clear, rich notes died away, and placing her hands on her hips, with chest expanded and head thrown back, she mimicked Sir Bobolink's rollicking glee. Never before, in the sedately methodical village of Shakertown, had such sounds been flung on the decorous breezes. Now,

as her song ended she drew a long sobbing breath of ecstasy.

When in the religious meetings the spirit moved Elizabeth to sing, none took up the strain, but listened breathless to the sweet new melody in the simple, familiar chant.

"Oh, Sister Hannah," she cried, "I must go; I cannot stay here. Dost thou not see that? Think of the great beautiful world. Think of the music and song. Oh, think of all the beautiful, wonderful things I am missing. That soulless bird is more to be envied than I, for he has freedom. Oh, what am I saying? I will never learn thy self-command. Do not reprove me," she moaned, as she threw one arm around Sister Hannah's neck and with her hand caressed the white, troubled face of the eldress.

"Forgive me, dear friend," she pleaded, "but let me go."

"Elizabeth," and the sweetly modulated voice helped to calm the impetuous girl, "thou hast been my especial care since thou wert brought to the village, a wee bairnie. In all things I have chosen for thee what seemed for thy best good." She hesitated, then saying, "I will speak with Elder Charles concerning thy wishes," she turned toward the house where he was standing on the steps.

"Wilt thou leave us a while?" Hannah requested, "and try to remember that in all things we seek thy truest happiness?"

Elizabeth walked on dejectedly while Elder Charles and Sister Hannah went into the office. The elder took one of the plain wooden chairs by the table, but Hannah chose to sit by the open curtainless window.

"She must never leave us," he declared, sternly. "She was sent to us that she might grow up into pure innocent womanhood."

"For nearly twenty years," Hannah began quietly, "she has been with us."